

Master At Arms

The Miniatures of Andrew Dyson L.C.G.I.

Born, Andrew Peter George Dyson in 1968, in the beautiful Yorkshire town of Holmfirth, where the award winning English comedy TV series, "Last of the Summer Wine" was set and filmed. Andrew, is in my view, destined to become one of the 21st Century's most foremost Miniature Arms makers. His native Yorkshire accent, youthful appearance and outgoing personality, belies the artistic talents, natural skill and exacting precision that Andrew brings to his Miniatures.

Andrew and his new bride Michelle live in the Old Gun Shop in Honley, Yorkshire, that the family business has owned for years. In fact this was the original shop the business was run from. The present showroom and workshop is now located in the basement of Andrew's parents 17th Century home.

Andrew's Parents, Peter and Wendy, who are well known and respected in the Firearms world, have run a most successful family business since 1964. It is little wonder that Andrew has followed in their footsteps. Educated, firstly at Kay's College in Huddersfield, he then attended Huddersfield Technical College - studying Mechanical Engineering for four years - where he attained his Licentiate of the City and Guilds Institute in Manufacturing Management. He joined the family firm of Peter Dyson & Son Ltd. in 1984 where he was apprenticed to his father Peter. During this period, he learned the



Above: Andrew, surrounded by some of his many specialized tools, in his workshop in the basement of his parents 17th Century home.

*Below: Andrew's father Peter Dyson, during the years in which the firm was **Gunmaker to the Royal Armouries**, showing some of his work to Queen Elizabeth.*



mysteries and magic of the art of Gunmaking and now is Director of the Company.

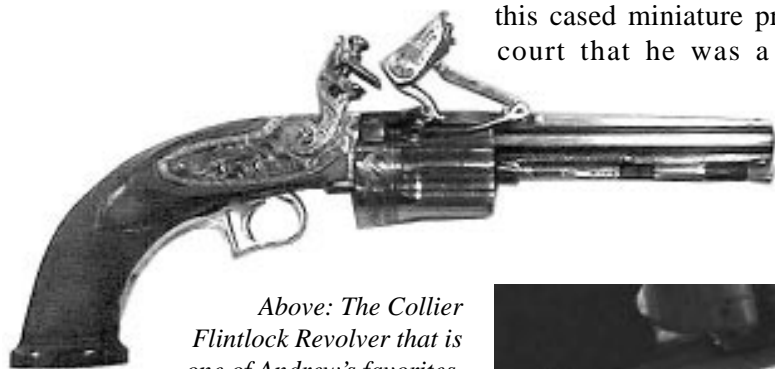
Andrew's passion for miniature weapons evolved during his 10-year apprenticeship. But, it was a remark by a family friend, the late Turner Kirkland of Dixie Gun Works, over dinner one evening in 1986 that really sparked Andrew's imagination. Admiring a shotgun handled teaspoon that Peter had made, Turner wondered if Peter would be interested in making him a silver rosebowl mounted on silver powder flasks. He then turned to Andrew and asked about the possibility of making a series of miniature, functional, solid silver firearms to place in the Rosebowl. Andrew's answer was that he wouldn't mind "having a go". Taking up the challenge, Andrew used all his natural skill and the knowledge, gained from his father, to produce his

By Derek F. Dredge



Above: A highly engraved miniature wheellock .

Andrews apprentice piece, a 1/4 scale Kentucky cased pistol seen here. It is now known as the Turner Kirkland Commemorative, along to the court - this cased miniature proved to the court that he was a competent



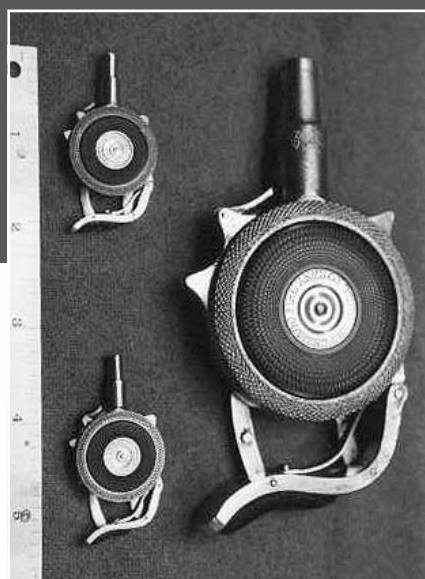
Above: The Collier Flintlock Revolver that is one of Andrew's favorites.

Right: The Dyson Signature.



very first miniature, a 7-barreled Pepperbox. It was finished three to four years into his apprenticeship, and was eventually featured on the front cover of Number 10, Volume 28 of the 1988 Guns Review Magazine.

In 1994, on the completion of his apprenticeship, his father proposed Andrew as a prospective Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Gunmakers - the application was rejected as the court considered that Andrew was too young. A few weeks later Peter sent

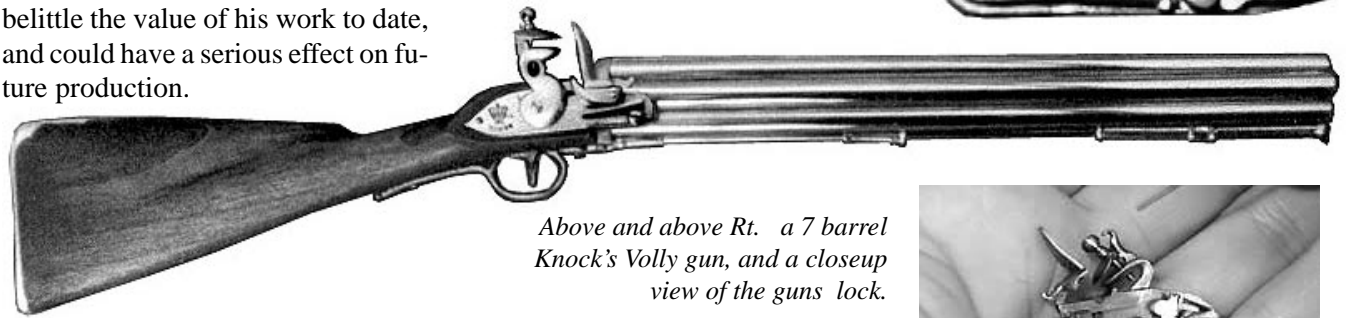


Top: two 1/2 scale Palm Pistols. Above: the insides of an unfinished Chicago Palm Pistol.

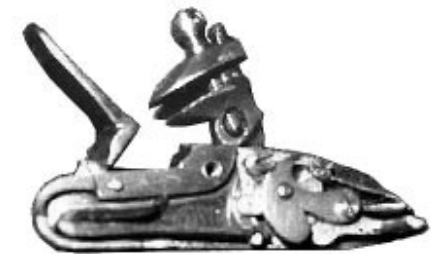
gunmaker. This started the procedure of becoming a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Gunmakers; first he was accepted as a freeman of the Gunmakers Company - some months later he was made a Freeman of the City of London (see footnote). This was followed by the honour of being accepted as a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Gunmakers, as are both his parents, making them a very unique family indeed.

Andrew enjoys the challenge of producing Miniatures; he specializes in hand making English pieces both flintlock and percussion, because that's what he enjoys the most, although as you can see from the images he will work on any type of Arm,

including a very nice Miniature Crossbow. The Chicago Palm Pistol will however not be produced anymore. Andrew has made quite a few and is quite frankly a little bored with them, and they are also a “real pig” to work on he say’s. At the moment he puts about 75% of his time into making the tiny works of art, he hopes, soon, to be able to completely devote all his time into Miniatures. Andrew tends, like so many other Miniature Makers, to work by making copies of original guns. But Andrew’s training has also given him a background so that he can produce a miniature from plans and patent drawings. He has no plans for any mass produced items and thinks that any move in that direction will only belittle the value of his work to date, and could have a serious effect on future production.



Above and above Rt. a 7 barrel Knock's Volly gun, and a closeup view of the guns lock.



From between 1996 and 2000, the Family business was contracted as Gunmakers to the Royal Armouries. Having the sheer number of antique museum pieces at his disposal naturally has encouraged Andrew to produce some quite simply exquisite pieces. Andrew reckons he has made about a hundred Miniatures; he unfortunately doesn't know where they all are. One he does know for certain, is a Miniature Wheelock, it was presented to H.M Queen Elizabeth II on the 15th March 1996 to commemorate the opening of the Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds.

His most difficult and the piece he's most proud of is a Collier revolver (p. 15). The gun nearly didn't get made. Andrew found it so de-

manding that he gave up on it for nearly a year. The gun now resides in the Ken Whichard collection. It is also featured in the Art of Miniature Firearms, pages 136 to 139, alongside others he has made.

Andrew's preferred scale for miniature making is 1/4 scale, although he has made them in other scales his largest being 3-1/2 scale. Special miniature tools and equipment are usually made to produce these tiny works of art. The 1/4 scale mainspring clamp included in the Kirkland cased set is invaluable and sees frequent use.

The most difficult part of any gun? The lock, without question, answers Andrew. Stocking is also a painstaking job; often, engraving

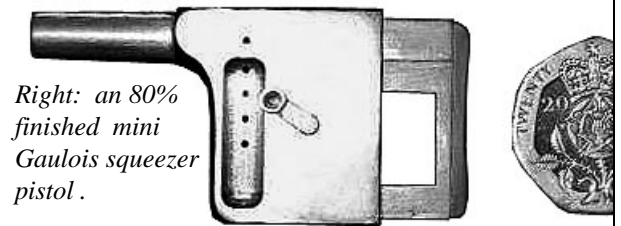
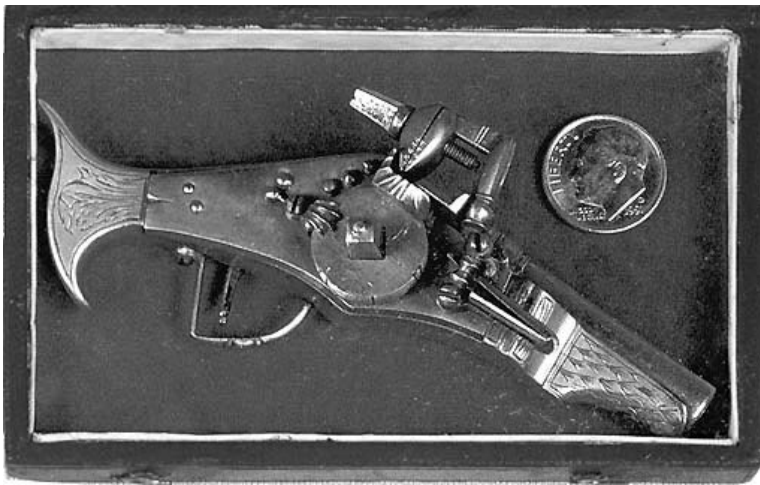
tools are adapted to cut the intricate shapes into to wood.

The building of miniature weapons is a time consuming process, and Andrew only occasionally has guns available from stock. (see Swap-n-Shop) It is more usual for a customer to say what gun they'd like and Andrew will give an approximate delivery time and price.

As for the future, Andrew intends to carry on making some of the best Miniatures in the world, plus -

Right: The well used spring clamp from the 1/4 scale Turner Kirkland commemorative Kentucky Flintlock Pistol shown below. OAL is 2-3/4"





Right: an 80% finished mini Gaulois squeezer pistol .

Left: a 1/4 scale, profusely engraved , brass and steel, miniature wheel-lock

if he has the time - some children, the odd vacation or two and a long and happy life. At only 32 years old, he is, considering his background, natural ability and enthusiasm, in the enviable position to look forward to perhaps another 30 years as an increasingly skilled maker of Miniatures. The future looks very rosy indeed for collectors.

My thanks to Andrew and his Parents, Peter and Wendy for making me feel so welcome during my short stay.

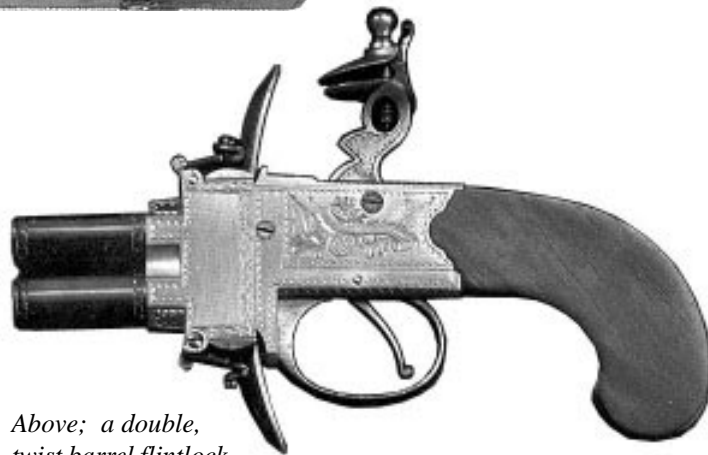
Footnote:

One could become a Freeman through 3 different avenues: 'Servitude' - after a completed apprenticeship with a City Guild (or Livery Company); 'Patrimony' - after becoming a member of a Guild and being the son of a Freeman of the City; 'Redemption' - one bought one's way in. (*This is ignoring the honorary Freedom awarded sometimes to distinguished people). Freeman were entitled to call themselves 'Citizen'.

by Derek F. Dredge

See Swap-n-Shop for information on miniatures Andrew has in stock.

Andrew can be contacted though the Company's Website @ <http://www.peterdyson-gunmakers.com>

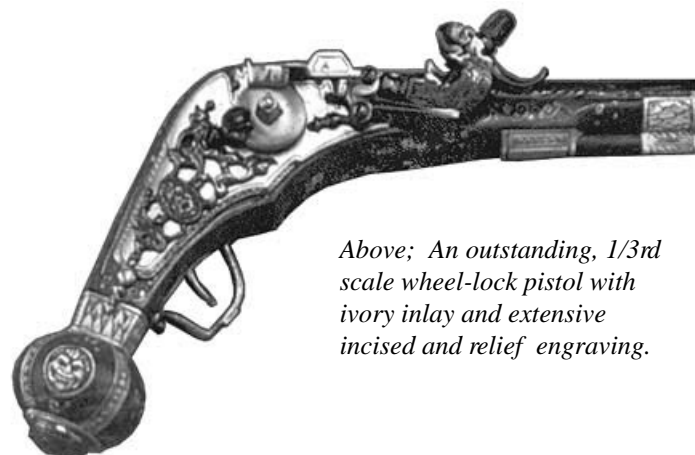


Above; a double, twist barrel flintlock, brass frame with steel barrels. Nicely engraved.

This gun is erroneously attributed to D. Bradbury in the "Art of Miniature Firearms".



Right: A 1/3rd scale Queen Anne pistol with a brass screw off barrel, and silver wire inlaid grips.



Above; An outstanding, 1/3rd scale wheel-lock pistol with ivory inlay and extensive incised and relief engraving.